

Message Text

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ACTION AID-31

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INFO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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DEPARTMENT PASS AID, NE/CD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, SENV, JO, SY

SUBJECT: JORDANIAN/SYRIAN AGREEMENT RE YARMOUK RIVER WATERS

REF: A) AMMAN 3983, B) TEL AVIV 3800

1. OMAR ABDULLAH IN MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR (REF. A) JULY 19 WAS ASKED TO RESPOND TO QUERIES (PARA 5, REFTEL B) MENTIONED BY GOI IN MAY 25 MEETING WITH U.S. TEAM REGARDING SYRIAN/JORDANIAN UNDERSTANDINGS REGARDING WATER RIGHTS.

2. ABDULLAH ACKNOWLEDGED THAT GOJ, AS REPORTED IN REFTEL A, HAS NOW OFFICIALLY RATIFIED AMENDMENT TO 1953 SYRIAN/JORDANIAN AGREEMENT RE YARMOUK RIVER WATERS. REGARDING STATUS OF SYRIAN RATIFICATION, ABDULLAH SAID HE UNDERSTANDS AMENDMENT IS NOW "ON PRESIDENT ASSAD'S DESK."

3. WITH REGARD TO INTERPRETATION OF LANGUAGE OF THE AMENDMENT "PROVIDED THAT THE NEIGHBORING SYRIAN VILLAGES BE SUPPLIED WITH THE NECESSARY AMOUNTS OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WATER AND ELECTRICITY" (REFTEL A), ABDULLAH SAID THIS REFERS TO MUNICIPAL POTABLE WATER REQUIREMENTS ONLY AND NOT RPT NOT TO WATER FOR IRRIGATION. (GOI DELEGATION IN MAY 25 MEETING HAD EVINCED CONCERN OVER RECENT MENTION (PARA 5, REFTEL B) IN SYRIAN PUBLICATION "TISHRIIN" OF SYRIAN PLANS TO IRRIGATE 15,000 HECTARES IN UPPER REACHES OF YARMOUK RIVER.) ABDULLAH SAID

THAT DIVERSION OF YARMOUK WATER UPWARDS FOR GOLAN HEIGHTS IRRIGATION IS OUT OF THE QUESTION AND HAS NEVER BEEN CONSIDERED. THE SYRIANS ARE TO TAP WATER SOURCES IN GOLAN UPSTREAM OF MAQARIN (MOZERIB SPRINGS) AND THIS IS ALLOWED FOR IN MAQARIN STUDIES; MOREOVER IT IS ECONOMICALLY INFEASIBLE TO DIVERT YARMOUK WATERS UPHILL FOR GOLAN HEIGHTS IRRIGATION. ABDULLAH SAID ONLY SYRIAN SCHEME IN PAST, PRIOR TO 1967 ISRAELI OCCUPATION, WAS TO TAP WATER SOURCES FROM AL HAMMA IN SOUTHERN DMZ FOR IRRIGATION ON EASTERN SHORE OF LAKE TIBERIAS.

4. ABDULLAH INDICATED HE IS GOING TO SYRIA JULY 20 PRIMARILY TO DISCUSS QUESTION OF POSSIBLE NEED FOR GOJ, AS OBLIGATION TO SYRIA, TO RELOCATE UP TO 15 KILOMETERS OF DERRA-MAQARIN RAILROAD TO BE MADE NECESSARY BY CONSTRUCTION OF MAQARIN DAM. ABDULLAH INDICATED HIS PREFERENCE TO INVESTIGATE OTHER MORE ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVES; HE BELIEVES JD 5 MILLION EXPENSE INVOLVED IN RELOCATING VIRTUALLY USELESS RAILROAD LINE COULD BE BETTER SPENT BY BUILDING NEW, OR IMPROVING CURRENT, JORDANIAN ROAD LINKS WITH SYRIA AND IMPLIED HE HOPED TO OBTAIN SYRIAN AGREEMENT TO SUCH A PROPOSAL DURING FORTHCOMING VISIT. A PRIMARY THOUGHT IS AQABA-DAMASCUS ROUTE THROUGH ARABA, DEAD SEA COAST, JORDAN VALLEY, YARMOUK, WADI RAGGAD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ALIGNMENT WHICH WOULD BE SHORTER AND LOWER THAN EXISTING ROUTES.
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